



1 HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of  
3 Representatives were saddened to learn of the death of William  
4 "Les" Brown of Chicago on April 11, 2005; and

5 WHEREAS, Mr. Brown was the founder of the Chicago Coalition  
6 for the Homeless, which he headed for over two decades; the  
7 coalition, founded in 1980, strived towards improving the lives  
8 of homeless and impoverished people throughout Chicago; and

9 WHEREAS, William "Les" Brown was born William Leslie Brown  
10 in 1940, in Tampa, Florida; he grew up on a small farm in  
11 Doraville, Georgia, where he developed his love for the  
12 outdoors; and

13 WHEREAS, He earned a bachelor's degree from Erskine College  
14 in South Carolina; he also received a master's degree in social  
15 work from Loyola University Chicago; in between receiving the  
16 two degrees, he enlisted in the Air Force and served as a  
17 medical corpsman in England; and

18 WHEREAS, He was the first president of the Chicago  
19 Coalition for the Homeless, later serving as its executive  
20 director; from 1990 until his death, he served as the  
21 coalition's director of policy; the coalition helped host the  
22 first national conference on homelessness in Chicago in 1983;  
23 and

24 WHEREAS, In 1984, he received a heart transplant at Loyola  
25 University Medical Center in Maywood; he was the hospital's  
26 longest surviving heart transplant recipient; and

27 WHEREAS, He was a founder and former president of the  
28 Illinois Coalition for the Homeless; he was also a founding  
29 board member of the newspaper, Streetwise, as well as a board

1 member for other local and state groups advocating for  
2 improving the lives of the homeless; and

3 WHEREAS, Mr. Brown served as director of social work  
4 services for the Travelers and Immigrants Aid Society, which is  
5 now the Heartland Alliance; he also documented the growing  
6 number of homeless people living at the Greyhound bus terminal,  
7 Union Station, and O'Hare Airport; and

8 WHEREAS, His accomplishments include leading protests that  
9 led to low-income apartment units being established in the  
10 government-subsidized West Loop Presidential Towers complex;  
11 he utilized a federal law to successfully acquire lakefront  
12 land near Navy Pier; the land he acquired was originally to be  
13 used as gardens to provide work for homeless people, but was  
14 later exchanged for land on the South Side that became the  
15 "Growing Home" agriculture job training program; and

16 WHEREAS, He also helped acquire 10 acres of land in  
17 Marseilles that is currently farmed by homeless people from  
18 Chicago; and

19 WHEREAS, Mr. Brown is survived by his wife, Diana Leifer;  
20 his son, Jesse; his daughter, Mari Herreras-Zinman; his sister,  
21 Claudia Lewis; and his two grandchildren; therefore, be it

22 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
23 NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
24 we mourn the passing of William "Les" Brown along with all who  
25 knew and loved him and extend our sincere condolences to his  
26 family, friends, and community; and be it further

27 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
28 presented to the family of William "Les" Brown as an expression  
29 of our deepest sympathy.